

# Our closest friend and neighbour

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When I arrived in Rome in June, 1992, I rang the doorbell of the Anglican Centre within the first week of my arrival and was warmly welcomed by then Director Father Douglas Brown, S.S.M. At that time the Centre was located in another part of the Palazzo Doria Pamphilj – a small and rather dark attic flat on the Via del Corso. Twenty-five years on, it has been amazing to watch the growth of the Centre, not only in terms of the move to its current location in the Palazzo just above the Galleria, but also in terms of its successive Directors who have consistently “raised the bar” in expanding staff, programmes, outreach, ecumenical collaboration, and visibility within Rome and beyond.

These past four years the Centre has reached an extraordinary prominence under the leadership of Archbishop Sir David Moxon. This culminated in the milestone of the Anglican Centre’s 50th anniversary celebrations last October, and the sending forth of pairs of Anglican and Roman Catholic Bishops by the Pope and Archbishop of Canterbury at the conclusion of their IARCCUM pilgrimage to Canterbury and Rome - commissioned to walk together intentionally and to collaborate together ecumenically back home in their respective dioceses and regions. But this leadership has also been evident in less dramatic ways as Archbishop David went about his work day by day in his usual gracious and self-effacing manner, embodying the best of Maori hospitality from his native New Zealand where all people are welcome and made to feel at home.



Coming to his post four years ago as the former Primate of the Anglican Church in New Zealand, Archbishop David’s reception in the Vatican has been quite remarkable. I have witnessed this personally in seeing the obvious affection and warmth that Pope Francis has for Archbishop David, greeting him by name with a kiss and an embrace, and last January, in kissing the Archbishop’s pectoral cross as he entered the sacristy of Saint Paul’s “Outside the Walls.” In typical humility, David said to me afterwards, “I’m sure the Pope did that because it was the Franciscan cross of San Damiano,” to which I replied, “David, San Damiano has nothing to do with it! He would have kissed whatever cross you were wearing!”

Whether in conversations within the Secretariat of State, the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity or other dicasteries, Archbishop David has served as a credible voice for ecumenism and for our bilateral ecumenical dialogues far beyond the Anglican Communion. His passionate commitment to the eradication of human trafficking and of facilitating bridge-building efforts at restoring peace in South Sudan, are just two examples that demonstrate the way in which the Anglican Centre has truly become an Embassy of Canterbury to Rome.

On a personal level, I have been richly blessed by Archbishop David’s deep friendship, and our steady collaboration as Directors of our respective institutions: the Anglican Centre and the Caravita Community where we share an ecumenical covenant. It is not an exaggeration to say that we were in almost daily contact, either through email, telephone, in person, or all of the above. His deep faith and commitment to the Gospel has had a great influence on my own life and ministry. Catholics have much to learn from Anglicans about preaching, and Archbishop David’s frequent preaching at ecumenical celebrations hosted by Caravita has been a rich gift to all of us.

May God abundantly bless Archbishop David, his wife Tureiti and their family as he returns home, and may God continue to make him a faithful servant in the washing of feet and the breaking of the bread.